

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama and Britain's Cameron Discuss Libya Crisis

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama continues his diplomatic efforts to work with nations and international groups on finding a solution to the crisis in Libya.

As part of his consultations with coalition allies and partners, Obama discussed U.N. Security Council resolutions on Libya with British Prime Minister David Cameron during an April 20 telephone call, according to the White House.

The leaders agreed that U.N. Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973 must be fully implemented to end the civil strife and protect the lives of Libyan citizens. Along with increasing military pressure and protecting civilians through the NATO-led operation in Libya, the leaders discussed increasing diplomatic and economic pressure on the regime of Muammar Qadhafi.

Both leaders noted the level of international consensus reached at the Libya Contact Group meeting in Doha, Qatar, on April 13 and the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Berlin April 14-15. Both meetings stressed the need for Qadhafi to leave power.

As part of American efforts to work with partners on Libya, Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough met with African Union (AU) Commission Chairman Jean Ping at the White House on April 21.

McDonough stressed the importance of the AU, the Arab League, the United Nations and NATO as partners working together to secure a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Libya. He also emphasized the value of the AU-U.S. relationship in engaging in Africa and reiterated America's commitment to work with the AU and African nations to strengthen democracy, economic development and peace and stability.

Additionally, McDonough and Ping discussed situations in Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia, and how the United States and the AU can work together on a range of issues. Ping was in Washington to attend the second annual U.S.-AU high-level dialogue, which includes meetings with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

Secretary Clinton, Rosenthal Discuss Libya, Afghanistan, Global Development

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Dutch Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal met to discuss the conflict in Libya, the mission in Afghanistan and global efforts to support sustainable development and empower women and girls.

"Our nations are part of a trans-Atlantic community that is united by shared values and a firm commitment to work together for peace, progress and prosperity," Clinton said at a joint press conference with Rosenthal April 21.

The two spoke from the State Department in Washington.

Rosenthal commended more than 400 years of history between what are now the United States and the Netherlands. He said the two countries share the important values of freedom, tolerance, democracy, human rights and the protection of religious minorities throughout the world. He added that the Netherlands is "working closely with the United States at promoting these values in the Arab region and also elsewhere in the world."

Both Clinton and Rosenthal condemned violence in Libya, and said the international community remains united in its resolve to protect Libyan civilians from continued attacks by Colonel Muammar Qadhafi's forces. Clinton expressed appreciation for Dutch contributions to the NATO-led no-fly zone.

The secretary also thanked the government and people of the Netherlands for their commitment to the mission in Afghanistan. She said U.S. and Dutch troops, diplomats and development experts continue to work side by side with the Afghan people to transfer the country's security control from NATO to Afghan forces, a process already under way and set to be completed in 2014.

Clinton said that as democratic transitions are under way in the Middle East and North Africa, the United States and the Netherlands are focused on cooperating to create greater political and economic opportunities for women.

"Both our nations recognize that when women and girls are accorded their rights and afforded opportunities, they drive political, economic and social progress," Clinton said.

She said their discussion included the commitment by both countries to support sustainable global development, and she highlighted a new challenge the United States

and the Netherlands have pledged to combat.

“Nearly 2 million people, mostly women and children, die each year from breathing the toxic smoke from dirty stoves and open fires that are used overwhelmingly for the cooking of daily meals,” Clinton said, calling the problem both a health and an environmental hazard.

The secretary said the United States has partnered with the Netherlands and the United Nations Foundation to form the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, with the goal of 100 million homes around the world adopting clean stoves and fuels by 2020.

Clinton and Rosenthal praised the long-standing U.S.-Netherlands partnership and pledged to continue to work together on a wide range of issues in the future.

U.N. Renews Efforts to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring WMDs

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration says it welcomes the 10-year extension of the U.N. committee charged with implementing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540, which obliges countries to take effective action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and prevent them from falling into the hands of nonstate actors.

On April 20, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1977. The measure extends the mandate of the 1540 Committee, which is charged with executing the 2004 resolution, assessing progress toward its implementation and aiding governments in fulfilling their obligations to prevent nonstate entities from obtaining weapons of mass destruction or the means to deliver them.

Nonstate actors can include terrorists and terrorist groups, extremist groups, insurgencies and criminal organizations engaged in illicit arms trade.

“The 1540 Committee’s new ten-year mandate allows it to continue its valuable work, including through adoption of effective laws, security measures, border controls and financial controls,” the White House said in an April 20 statement. Under Resolution 1977, the 1540 Committee will have a group of experts to provide it with advice and assistance, and the committee will be able to work more closely with regional and intergovernmental organizations to better implement the resolution.

The White House added that the Obama administration intends to make a voluntary contribution of \$3 million to

support the 1540 Committee’s activities, to “further underscore its commitment” to President Obama’s April 2009 call in Prague for a world without nuclear weapons.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N. Susan Rice said that by adopting the resolution, the Security Council “has taken a firm and unanimous stand against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

In an April 20 statement, Rice said terrorist organizations and other nonstate actors are determined to acquire WMDs, and the threat “is just as serious today as it was in 2004” when Resolution 1540 was adopted.

The new U.N. measure “sharpens the tools” of the 1540 Committee by providing it with experts and technical assistance, Rice said.

According to press reports, the committee can assist governments in preventing the spread of WMDs by helping them prepare relevant legislation, oversee security measures to protect potential WMD ingredients, and strengthen police efforts and border controls.

President Obama hosted world leaders in Washington April 12–13, 2010, for a Nuclear Security Summit that served to increase international recognition of the shared threat from nuclear terrorism and obtain agreement on concrete actions to prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials to nonstate actors.

Participating countries embraced the goal of securing all of the world’s vulnerable nuclear materials within four years and agreed that they have a responsibility to safeguard all nuclear materials and facilities under their control.

Since the president’s April 2009 speech, the United States has aggressively pursued nuclear nonproliferation. Along with hosting the Nuclear Security Summit, President Obama chaired the U.N. Security Council’s 2009 adoption of Resolution 1887, which sets a framework to guide nations in halting the spread of nuclear weapons and reducing global nuclear dangers, and helped to bring about global consensus on strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty at its five-year review conference in May 2010.

Cuban “Ladies in White” Honored with Human Rights Award

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — A group of courageous Cuban women who are struggling for the release of political prisoners were honored for their work at the U.S. State Department

on April 21.

Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White) received the Human Rights Defenders Award for bringing international attention to more than 70 independent journalists, labor leaders and human rights activists who were arrested by the Cuban government in the spring of 2003, convicted of “political crimes” and imprisoned.

“Damas de Blanco distinguishes itself not only by the depth of its commitment to the release of political prisoners, but by the full measure of its bravery in defense of human rights in Cuba,” said William J. Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs, who presented the award.

The Human Rights Defenders Award showcases individuals and nongovernmental organizations that show exceptional valor and leadership in advocating for human rights and democracy in the face of governmental repression.

Julia Nuñez accepted the award on behalf of Damas de Blanco. She is married to Adolfo Fernandez Sainz, an independent journalist who was sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment during the “Black Spring” of 2003. She was a homemaker prior to her husband’s imprisonment, but joined the Damas de Blanco to demand the release of her husband and others.

The Damas de Blanco — most of them mothers, wives and other female relatives of the prisoners — joined together shortly after the 2003 arrests of their loved ones and called for their release by holding constant vigils at the Santa Rita Church in Havana. Dressed in white, they walked down Havana’s most traveled streets carrying gladiolas and photographs of their imprisoned relatives.

The women were subjected to constant government surveillance and regular visits by state security. The Cuban government organized mobs to demonstrate in front of the women’s homes. These pro-government demonstrations could go on for hours and included throwing stones or eggs and chanting pro-revolutionary slogans.

Through it all, the Damas de Blanco persevered. As of April 2011, all of the political prisoners arrested in 2003 have been released. Even so, there are still numerous political prisoners in Cuban jails.

“The Damas helped create the conditions that led to the release of the political prisoners arrested during the Black Spring crackdown of 2003,” Burns said. “With much of the battle for human rights in Cuba forced underground, the Damas de Blanco kept marching. And they keep on providing a poignant weekly reminder of the day-to-day

repression that Cubans face.”

“We stand alongside the Damas de Blanco in calling for the release of all remaining political prisoners,” Burns said.

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